

Attachment 1

*Applicant's Rationale for Condensed
Application Review Process
(July 17, 2025)*

June 10, 2025
Revised July 17, 2025

City of New Westminster
511 Royal Avenue
New Westminster, BC V3L 1H9

To: Wendee Lang, Senior Development Manager

From: Pooni Group Inc.

RE: Royal Towers - Condensed Application Review Rationale

Following our correspondence submitted June 10, 2025 for the June 23, 2025 Council meeting, the following memo has been updated to reflect a change in the request to Council as a result of additional information and consideration by Vintop.

Vintop remains committed to an accelerated timeline for all of the reasons stated below - direction from the project partners is to request that Council direct staff to proceed with the original Master Plan process defined in collaboration with City staff. Vintop has since learned that potential affordable housing funding streams do not require title or a development permit in order to apply for funding, and other means of commitment are acceptable for application submission (i.e., letter of intent, purchase-and-sales agreement, documentation about how the transfer will proceed, and predesign and schematic design drawings). The intent is to apply for funding as soon as reasonably possible with a proposal that works for the City, Vintop and project partners, and Lookout Housing and Health Society (Lookout). In light of this information, Vintop is confident that working through the Master Plan expeditiously and with the City's support in providing a commitment letter will help Lookout secure funding while ensuring that Vintop's entitlement process continues to proceed.

The following memo summarizes Vintop's actions on 140 Sixth Street (Royal Towers) since the site was purchased in 2017, the progress on the Master Plan rezoning application that was submitted in May 2024, and the need for a condensed application review process.

Pre-Application

Following purchase of the site, an initial pre-application was made in 2018, where the maximum building height was limited to 30-storeys. A second pre-application was submitted in 2021 in response to City staff's directions for increased affordable housing, non-profit housing provider selection, and reduced commercial space.





Master Plan Rezoning Application

A Master Plan rezoning application was formally submitted in April 2024, with the application fee paid on May 28, 2024. In September 2024, City staff provided a review memo in response to the application. In October 2024, Council approved additional building height up to 40-storeys.

Since then, Vintop has been working on refining the proposal and design for the site, including a phasing approach, and engaging with potential non-profit organizations (NPOs). In March 2025, Vintop signed a Letter of Interest (LOI) with Lookout to be the potential owner and operator of Phase 1, which consists of two buildings: one with rental replacement/inclusionary units and the other with market rentals. In April 2025, a rationale letter was signed between Vintop and Lookout that summarizes considerations and benefits of the partnership, and recognizes the opportunity to deliver housing to the City of New Westminster.

Between March and May 2025, Vintop has been working with City staff on a Phasing, Tenant Assistance Plan, and Public Benefit Package proposal. The proposal was developed with input from Lookout, who Vintop has selected to be the third-party Tenant Assistance Coordinator.

Lookout Funding & Timing Requirements

Lookout received confirmation from the City as NPO for Phase 1 and is currently sourcing funding opportunities, potentially including both government programs and traditional lending partners. Based on a preliminary review of available programs, the Province's Community Housing Fund (CHF) and BC Builds programs may be funding opportunities that have time sensitive application deadlines. To be competitive in these applications, Lookout will likely need assurances from the City that they are working with the applicant and housing provider on an accelerated timeline and best efforts to achieve a reasonable construction start time.

The first CHF call was launched on May 30, 2025 with an expected four rounds of intake. The final intake is anticipated to be in Spring 2026; however, funding calls will only be offered until funds are depleted. Therefore, Lookout would like to be able to submit for funding within the last quarter of 2025 to ensure their application is considered within the 2025 funding budget.

We are seeking a commitment letter from the staff to provide assurances that the City will work with Vintop on an expedited Master Plan timeline to enable Lookout to start construction within 24 months of funding approval, and pending Council approval of the Master Plan application.



Vintop's Lending Conditions

Vintop's land loan expired last year due to the length of time it has taken to get to a formal application submission. A bridge loan was secured until October 2025, which will need to be replaced by a new land loan based on future phases as defined by the Master Plan. Funding partners would like assurance about what future phases look like as it would be understood that financing for separate parcels would be sought from different partners for different phases. The alternative is that financing is renewed for the entire site and this would make it challenging for Phase 1 to be subdivided (i.e., affordable housing site). Financing and the funding of development are presenting significant issues in the development industry and any significant delays will impact whether the project advances.

Vintop has owned the land for close to a decade and has been working diligently to address staff's feedback and meet the vision the City has for the site. We understand that Third Reading may be unattainable by the end of the year, but working ambitiously with the City on an accelerated timeline will help build confidence amongst project funders and the owners that the project will continue to advance. There remains significant risk that if we are unable to achieve Third Reading by the end of 2025, the project may result in further delays both to the existing tenants receiving a new unit and the delivery of public benefits to the City including below market and market rental homes, retail space and streetscape improvements along Royal Avenue, and potential new office space for the City.

Given the uniqueness of the site, Vintop has taken time to develop a proposal that phases the site in a way that minimizes disruption to existing tenants and provides significant public benefits to the City. An expedited review timeline will help both Vintop and the selected NPO secure the financing required to make this project a reality.